

Fishing Tournament Advisory Committee

November 12, 2005

10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Holiday Inn, Wausau/Schofield

MEETING NOTES

- I. Welcome and Introductions (5 minutes)
A. Welcome and introduction of attendees.

In attendance:

Patrick Schmalz, WDNR

Paul Schmalz, Interested citizen

Ryan Richards, WI Sports Development Corp.

Steven Lindahl, Ranger Boats

Mike Hofmann, WI BASS Federation

Robert Selk, Trout Unlimited

Mark Soletske, NEW Bass

Ron Benjamin, WDNR

Bob Miller, WI Wildlife Federation

Roger Dreher, WI Assoc. of lakes

Russell Wilson, WDNR

Steve Winters, WI SMB Alliance

Ed Nelson, WDNR

Jordan Petchenik, WDNR

Tom Van Haren, WDNR

Steve Poll, World Walleye Assoc.

Cornell Stroik, WI BASS Federation

- B. Agenda Repair.

Item III. B.1. was moved to first on the agenda with no objection.

III. Bass Fishing Tournament Pilot Program

B. Pilot Program Evaluation

1. Sociological impacts – attitudes toward fishing tournaments (Jordan Petchenik/Ed Nelson – WDNR Research).

Schmalz introduced WDNR social scientists Jordan Petchenik and Ed Nelson. They will be leading the development and execution of the sociological impacts of the bass fishing tournament pilot program and tournament fishing in general. Petchenik followed by providing some background regarding their positions in WDNR ISS and their research.

Petchenik stated that there were two questions that the FTAC needs to consider: 1) What are the questions (what is the information) the study should ask; and 2) Who should be included in the study? Nelson followed by asking the FTAC what they knew about the sociological impacts project. Generally, the group knew only that such a project was going to be part of the pilot program evaluation and likely include some sort of survey tool.

Lengthy discussion ensued, including several specific questions and concerns expressed by members of the FTAC:

- **Who will be included in the survey? Although there was initially some confusion, at this point, WDNR is looking to the FTAC to help decide whom to include. Nelson provided an initial list that included (in rank order): 1) General anglers; 2) Lake-shore property owners; 3) Tournament anglers; and 4) Other water users. Such a priority was established because time and money may limit how many groups we can include. Specific comments related to who to include:**

- Lake associations need to be included, particularly those directly impacted by tournaments. *RESPONSE: Schmalz noted that he had already created a list of waters that have the highest frequency of tournaments (as determined by looking at the WDNR permit database).*
 - Chambers of Commerce in the areas where tournaments are held should be surveyed, as they can provide the viewpoint of local businesses and the general population.
 - There was some concern that including chambers of commerce (i.e. local businesses) may confuse the social and economic impact evaluations, although others felt chambers of commerce would represent several aspects/groups.
 - Local communities should be surveyed in addition to the 4 groups already mentioned.
 - Some felt that surveying those not directly impacted by tournaments (from any of the defined groups) would not be valuable and that the survey should include only those directly impacted. Others disagreed. The best design may need to include some of both (general vs. directly impacted).
- What are the topics/questions that should be addressed?
 - Measurement of attitudes towards various species tournaments.
 - What are the concerns about tournaments (e.g. issue identification)?
 - Safety, fairness, crowding/carrying capacity, noise, aquatic exotics/disease, enjoyment/aesthetics.
 - What are people hearing/seeing about tournaments?
 - What are people's beliefs or concerns about mortality?
 - Where do people get their fisheries information (e.g. WDNR web site)?
 - Do people know what is going on?
 - Are people aware of culling? Do they even know what it is?
 - Do people feel believe that tournaments negatively impact the resource?
 - What is the impact of tournaments on public access?
 - Would people like to see fewer tournaments?
 - What motivates anglers to fish tournaments?
 - Money?
 - Camaraderie?
 - Others?
 - What are the positive impacts of tournament fishing? Are they aware?
 - Should tournaments be granted special rules?
 - Should tournaments be held to higher standards?
 - Where do we go from here?
 - Informal small group discussions to verify the topics identified.
 - Survey instrument development.
 - Survey instrument testing.
 - Survey implementation.
 - Data analysis and report completion.

Other questions and comments regarding the sociological impact evaluation:

- **Will the different groups be analyzed separately? *RESPONSE: Yes, although specific methodologies will be determined after the objectives, topics, and audiences are identified. It was felt that it should be simple to send the survey close to tournament time to satisfy the targeted sampling. Some specific sampling methods were discussed***
- **What is the timing of the survey? How broad will it be given? *RESPONSE: Much of that is yet to be determined. There was extensive discussion of targeted sampling versus random sampling of the various groups. The researchers need to evaluate this and make a determination based on sampling concerns and logistical concerns.***
- **General anglers want to know if tournament fishing has an impact on the resource.**
- **Will this survey be conducted at the Spring Hearings? *RESPONSE: No. This effort will be conducted in a scientific manner, independent of the spring hearings.***

Final recommendation of the FTAC was to allow the researchers to take the information they received at this meeting back with them and develop a research strategy and get back to the committee.

Final thoughts of the FTAC:

- **Is it going to be fair?**
- **Concerned about polling the general angler.**
- **Going in the right direction.**
- **WDNR has its work cut out for it.**
- **Need to poll conservation clubs.**
- **Very interested in seeing the results.**
- **Need to ask the right questions in the right manner.**
- **Good luck!**

II. Fishing Tournament Rule Development

A. Boundary waters regulations

Schmalz updated the committee on recent developments relating to fishing tournaments and tournament regulations on the boundary waters. In a recent communication, it was brought to the attention of the WDNR that tournament organizers plan to circumvent the MN-DNR tournament permit and regulation process by holding events out of Wisconsin landings (specifically they then do not have to adhere to Pool limits or run the risk of not receiving a permit due to number limits in MN). WDNR has noticed an increase in the number of events held out of WI landings ever since adoption of tournament regulation in MN in 2001. In addition WDNR met with MDNR to discuss boundary waters issues and learned that MDNR is seeking to make changes to its tournament regulations. WDNR and MDNR have committed to having similar boundary waters regulations.

1. Review of MN fishing tournament rules.

Schmalz reviewed and explained current and proposed MDNR fishing tournament regulations (PowerPoint presentation).

2. Discussion and decision/recommendation on boundary rules proposal.

The FTAC agreed that boundary water regulations should be consistent between the states. However there were some aspects of the MDNR regulations that the FTAC felt should be slightly modified in WDNR regulations. Specific discussion points follow:

- There is a need for consistent regulations, however the department needs to consider and address other issues relating to MDNR regulations, such as size limits culling. WDNR is just picking and choosing the regulations it likes and ignores others under the auspices of consistency. WDNR should seek to adopt inland MDNR culling regulations.
- WDNR tournament permits should be issued to Wisconsin residents only (MDNR permits only for MN residents).
- A fee covering administrative costs should be charged for WDNR permits.
- WDNR should exempt youth tournaments and those not limited to specifically named waters or to specific dates (same as current MDNR regulations).
- The WDNR fishing tournament permit application process should follow the process currently followed by MDNR, but with the proposed MDNR deadlines:
 - Issued by regional fisheries supervisor.
 - Permit applications accepted beginning August 1 (currently September 1 in MDNR regulations, but proposed to change).
 - Permit applications received through last Friday in September (currently October in MDNR regulations, but proposed to change) for waters where monthly limits are exceeded, applicant will be notified that there will be a drawing.
 - Applicants are given 7 days to modify applications to avoid a drawing, as long as modifications do not cause monthly limits to be exceeded.
 - Drawings conducted for all waters and time periods where limits are exceeded.
 - First preference in the drawings will be given to applicants for established or traditional fishing contests.
 - Second preference to contests that are not established as traditional fishing contests (preference points will be given to this group based on the number of times they have been unsuccessful in previous drawings).
 - Except for applicants of established contests, an applicant loses all accumulated preference points after being successfully drawn.
 - Applicants are notified by November 7 (Currently December 7 in MDNR regulations, but proposed to change).
 - Permit applications received after the last Friday in September (currently October in MDNR regulations, but proposed to change) may be approved if the approval would not result in the limits on the number of permitted fishing contests being exceeded. These applications will be considered on a first-come, first-serve basis.
- The committee was okay with limiting the number of permitted tournaments per pool to 4 per month. Currently MDNR limits the number of permitted tournaments in a month based on surface acreage. All but one Mississippi River pool falls within the surface acreage range resulting in 4 per month. MDNR is proposing the 4 per month limit for all pools for simplicity.

- The FTAC agreed with the granting of one additional permit beyond monthly limits per pool per year.
- The FTAC did not agree with current MDNR regulations that allow the MDNR to require two weekends per month with no permitted fishing tournaments from Memorial Day – Labor Day (MDNR is proposing to change to this restriction year-round).
 - Instead, the FTAC felt that perhaps limiting the number of events that may be held on any given weekend to 2 with no required ‘tournament-free’ weekends.
 - The FTAC felt this limit should apply only during the summer (Memorial Day – Labor Day).
- The FTAC felt that no tournaments should be permitted on holiday weekends.
- The FTAC did not agree with regulating pre-fishing.
- The FTAC agreed with allowing the WDNR to place restrictions and standards for off-site weigh-ins.
- The FTAC did not agree with regulating the use of parking spaces at access sites.
- The FTAC agreed with limiting multi-pool tournaments to one lockage (participants are allowed one lockage each day). This results in a 3-pool maximum.
- The FTAC agreed with regulations that restricted or placed standards on live release tournaments. Live well and fish holding at weigh-in standards were discussed.
 - Specifically no live-release walleye tournaments from Memorial Day – Labor Day.
 - Discussed restrictions on live release tournaments due to LMBV.
 - The FTAC did not agree with prohibition of live release events.
 - Suggested limiting July and August tournaments to one pool.
- The FTAC did not agree with specifically banning fizzing.
- WDNR cannot impose exotics regulations similar to MDNR tournament regulations.

Other comments:

- Language should be included that allows WDNR to modify permit conditions based on environmental conditions, allowing flexibility.
- Four designated individuals (including FTAC, WDNR and MDNR) should work on this together, given the short time frame.

MDNR is seeking to finalize its rule changes by early to mid-December. Schmalz will incorporate the results of this discussion into draft rules for boundary waters. In addition, he will talk with MDNR about issues that the FTAC differed in opinion from current or proposed MDNR regulations. The FTAC and WDNR tournament working group will conduct review of the draft rules through mail and email.

III. Bass fishing tournament pilot program.
A. Selection of 2006 events.

1. Review of 2006 applications.

Eight (8) applications for the 2006 bass fishing tournament pilot program were received for the four (4) 2006 pilot program tournaments. The events and dates are in the table below:

Event	Location	Dates
Sturgeon Bay Open Bass Tournament	Sturgeon Bay - Sawyer Park	May 20 – 21
Bassmaster Series	Mississippi River Pools 3-4, Alma	June 25
FLW Everstart Series	Mississippi River Pools 7-10	July 12 – 15
Bassmaster Series	Wolf River Chain, Winneconne	July 30
Bassmaster Series	Madison Chain – Lake Farm	August 13
WI BASS Federation State Tournament	Sturgeon Bay - Sawyer Park	August 19-20
WI BASS Federation 4-Man Classic	Madison Chain – Lake Farm	Sept. 23-24
Bassmaster Series	Chippewa Flowage – Herman's	October 1

Schmalz summarized the events using the criteria established for review of applications.

2. Discussion and decision/recommendation on four events for 2006.

The events highlighted in bold type in the table above were the final recommendations of the FTAC. Specific discussion and comments follow:

- **Sturgeon Bay Open:**
 - Schmalz explained to the committee that the Sturgeon Bay Open bass tournament is a source of controversy annually from both local residents and legislators.
 - Steve Winters contacted Tim Kroeff (WDNR – Sturgeon Bay) and Tim stated that the Sturgeon Bay Open could overlap with the SMB spawn, however most spawning occurs during June in most years.
 - Winters also contacted Gary Nault, former tournament director for the SBO, and he stated his opposition to including the SBO in the pilot program.
 - It was noted that the SBO has a team bag limit (2 anglers) of 6 fish.
 - It was also noted that the SBO is the largest open-water tournament in Wisconsin and estimating its economic benefit would be valuable, and thus it should be included.
 - It is not unreasonable to conduct the economic impact portion of the evaluation without permitting the event to cull, because this event will occur regardless of whether it is awarded a permit to cull.
 - The event is cutting back to a maximum of 200 boats.
- **Bassmaster Series Alma Pools 3-4:**
 - Alma is a small town with an access site for ~50 boats only.
- **FLW Everstart Series LaCrosse Pools 7-10:**
 - This event has already been evaluated, so why do it again?
 - WDNR has some concerns regarding logistics, given the results of the 2005 work.
 - This is the largest “new” event to come to Wisconsin, and only due to the ability to cull.

The final recommendations of the FTAC were:

- 1) Sturgeon Bay Open, May 20-21
- 2) FLW Everstart Series, July 12-15, LaCrosse, Mississippi River pools 7-10.
- 3) Bassmaster Series, July 30, Winneconne.

4) Wisconsin BASS Federation 4-Man Classic, September 23-24, Madison Chain.

Schmalz clarified that this was a recommendation to the WDNR from the FTAC and that WDNR will make the final decision. In addition, changes could be made beyond the control of the department. Two additional events were suggested in the event other events were not chosen. Those are:

5) Bassmaster Series, June 25, Alma, Mississippi River Pools 3-4.

6) Wisconsin BASS Federation, Sturgeon Bay, August 19-20.

Schmalz stated that he would work on drafting boundary water tournament rules and provide them to the FTAC for review via email or US mail, as the likelihood of meeting again prior to mid-December was slim. The FTAC agreed.

No meeting date was set. The meeting was adjourned.